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mazlum-kishi is the Turki for "woman" and means literally "oppressed person"). However, small-talk is not so necessary when you have plenty of diseases, as these oppressed ones apparently had, and D. scored another social success. A couple of hours later we were settling into comfortable *aq-ois* provided by Father Christmas on a meadow by the Kinkol River. Near by grew many mushrooms, a rare treat. On the mountain-sides all round we could hear the red-legged partridges calling; I accepted their invitation, and a brace of them soon graced our camp larder. I may mention that between Yambulak and Kichik Karaul not a day passed that we did not bag partridges or hares, or both, for the pot. Next day I had a misfortune in the shape of a nasty fall with the black horse, which came down suddenly at the trot and threw me on to a sharp stone, which bruised my thigh somewhat severely, causing me to faint twice with the pain. I rode the rest of the march (and the two following days) on a yak or pony with my leg in a sling, neither a comfortable nor a rapid mode of progression. This delayed us very much and we took a day longer to get into Kashgar than we would otherwise have done.

Further down the valley became very wild and rugged, and raging glacier-torrents from the Qizil Tagh or "Red Mountains" on our right had to be crossed as well as the main stream. Here, at a place called Sasik Tika, we noticed a single poverty-stricken *aq-oi*. I distinctly remember commenting on the sinister look of the valley at this point. I was reminded of this the following spring, when I was present at the trial by the Magistrate of Yangi Hissar of the Kirghiz to whom the *aq-oi* belonged for the murder of a Chitrali traveller.[1]

Soon after leaving the next camp, Toqoi Bashi, the first real trees we had seen since Tashqurghan appeared, and after that we were never without some. Short, thick-set trees they were, with fluted bark and small, pointed leaves; further down the valley some of them attained great size. We did not then know to what species they belonged, but they afterwards became very familiar. They were the desert poplar (*P. varifolia*, Turki *toghraq*) which is the characteristic tree of the Tarim Basin and, outside the oases, the only one that grows at all freely.

That night we camped at the first settled village of Kashgaria, Kichik Qaraul or "The Little Fort" It was pleasant to sit on the grass and munch juicy melons, nectarines and

[1] For an account of this trial, see Ch. X.

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so that there was nothing stilted about these functions. I was surprised to find that, though they all knew some Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, only one of my Turki friends spoke Persian. That tongue, however, was our regular means of communication with the British subjects of Chitrali or Afghan extraction, including some of the Aqsaqals.

We were not very much at headquarters in spring, summer and autumn, but when we were our spare time was fully occupied with rides and walks, tea-basket picnics, tennis with the Indian clerks on our excellent hard court, and so on. In winter there was skating on perfect ice from about 20th November to 10th February, as well as excellent duck- and snipe-shooting. My attempts to make a small practice-rink in the lower garden were not a success ; nothing would induce the water to remain under the ice as it formed. But there are many marsh-lakes throughout the Kashgar oasis which, as early as the middle of November, carry a foot or more of mirror-smooth black ice. The nearest of these natural rinks was six miles along the Aqsu road, and there was another one, much larger, among the marshes of Salarma five miles south-west of the New City. Two or three afternoons a week I rode out to one or other of these lakes, and often D. came with me or followed later with guns and the tea-basket. A couple of hours' exhilarating practice on the perfect ice would be followed by tea on a sunny bank, after which we would take our guns and an orderly to neighbouring haunts of duck and teal that we knew of, seldom returning empty-handed.

On days when there was not time to go out to the lakes there was plenty of shooting close at hand. The Tümen Su, which flows past the Consulate-General, the Qizil Su two miles to the south, the Yaman Yar and other rivers, together with the innumerable springs along their banks, are frequented between October and March not only by the mallard and teal which breed in Kashgaria but by countless hosts of duck, geese and snipe of all kinds passing to and fro between the colder lands to the north and the lakes of Afghanistan, East Persia and North-western India. One day in November we counted no less than twenty-three gaggles of geese in the sky at the same moment, winging their way south-eastwards from beyond the Mountains of Heaven. A spring among the frozen rice-fields immediately below our garden wall was the haunt for weeks of several duck and a couple of snipe,

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which were so confiding that we came to regard them as pets and spared them from the pot; but less than a mile away, under the eastern wall of the city, was a large area of rice-fields kept moist by slightly warm springs, where on good days one could rely on putting up twenty or thirty couple of snipe. As for duck, I counted no less than eight different quiet spots within two miles where we could be reasonably sure of a shot at any time of the day.

We had also our various hobbies. I spent hours puzzling out the results of my plane-tabling among the "Alps of Qungur" and elsewhere, and had also my enlarging apparatus (worked with an incandescent spirit lamp) with which I turned out many hundreds of pictures from my ever-increasing collection of negatives. The garden was D.'s chief joy and pride, but she also gathered the Consulate children round her two or three afternoons a week and taught them sewing, gardening, outdoor games and other accomplishments as well as such Girl-Guide and Wolf-Cub ideas as were appropriate in the circumstances. There was also a perfect menagerie of pets, useful or ornamental, to look after; these included at various times (and mostly at the same time) three cats, four snow-cock, three gazelles, fourteen hens, five ducks, a white pony about the size of a Shetland which I bought at Qizil Bazar for the equivalent of eighteen shillings, eight rabbits and a camel. The gazelles and the poultry all came to a tragic end at one time or another at the jaws of the semi-wild dogs which are such a pest in Kashgaria. These brutes hunt in packs at night when they are supposed to be guarding their masters' houses, and though I repulsed several of their attacks with my gun and killed some of them, they always came back, scrambling over the high walls of the garden with extraordinary agility. The loss of the poultry was particularly sad, for the cock, a magnficent bird of great size with all the colours of the rainbow in his plumage, had been picked up by us at a farm near Yarkand, while D. had brought back two beautiful hens three hundred miles or more from Khotan and Aqsu respectively. D. was breeding from these three birds and had raised two fine sets of chickens, when the dogs broke into their house and killed the whole lot one night. The feline members of the community were perhaps the most important of all; D. and I are both cat-lovers, and there is no doubt that the pussies ruled the Consulate. Their names reflected our polyglot habits at Kashgar, for the big tabby was "Chong Mao," the middle-

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to 105°. Another climatic feature arising from "continentality" is the fact that April is much hotter than October, which is the warmer month in other regions of the globe. 132

In winter the ground freezes to a depth of a foot and a half, and all irrigation water stops owing to the choking of the canals with ice between 15th November and the end of February. Yet the Kashgar winter is not at all a formidable affair. The skies indeed are sometimes grey with dust-haze, and for several days in January the thermometer does not rise above freezing-point. But the sun shines most of the time, while as for wind, that terror of cold lands, we had none worth mentioning. Ringed round on three sides by lofty ranges, Kashgar is mercifully windless in winter, so that in spite of the hard and prolonged frost the cold is not severe. We made ourselves very cosy in the evenings in front of roaring wood fires. One of the first things we did to the Consulate was to instal good British open fireplaces, not being content with the cheerless Russian stoves we found in the house: vast shiny black cylinders like the funnels of monstrous locomotives, which disfigured and either under- or over-heated every room. There are usually one or two light snowfalls during the winter, but the snow melts very quickly in the strong sun, except where there is underlying ice. In spring and early summer occasional storms with rain or dust or both vary the monotony of the eternal sunshine, and are also to be welcomed for the exquisite clearness of the air which follows them. At any time in July or August the weather may become, for short spells at a time, unpleasantly warm according to European though not to Indian standards; punkahs are unknown, though I must confess I should sometimes have been glad of one. But the nights are seldom oppressively hot, except occasionally just before a storm. Another fly—to use an appropriate metaphor—in the ointment of a Kashgar summer is the insect life. 136 • Mosquitoes and sand-flies are a trial, though not to be compared with those of an Indian plains station; the former are smaller and less robust than those of Hindustan, and both can be effectively circumvented by a mixture of citronella oil and kerosene. At night muslin sand-fly curtains are advisable, unless one is sleeping in the open air and well away from walls.

One would have expected that the cities of Chinese Turkistan, where ideas regarding sanitation and hygiene are of the most primitive, would be hotbeds of disease and regularly 164 364

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very well, and the negatives of it which I took up with me to-day were most useful in enabling me to identify the various peaks. Again I spent three hours on the top, mapping and photographing, but this time there were no contretemps on the way down and we returned to camp before sunset. D. and Nazaroff have had a good day too. They went out shooting rock-pigeons this morning and got two each, and in the afternoon D. gave a tea-party to the Kirghiz women and children of the valley. This has caused great excitement. Seven women and two children came, all there are in the valley, bringing their own wooden bowls like school-children their mugs to a treat. D. had plenty of bread baked for the occasion in one of the *aq-ois* and had also made some drop-scones herself; she bought quantities of rich yaks' milk in the morning and used up in the tea most of our remaining supply of sugar, which the ladies with squeaks of delight scooped with their fingers out of the bottom of their bowls.

Khantereh, 21st October, 1922.

All the Kirghiz, including D.'s guests of yesterday, came to see us off this morning and seemed genuinely sorry to bid us adieu, begging us to come again next year. The Chopkana pass proved 11,500 feet high and fairly easy, though loaded camels could not have crossed it. At the top, under the crags of Kaying Beli, I went after a covey of snow-cock, which the Kirghiz call *ulai*, but they were far too wild. This bird seems to be the same as the *răm chikor* of the Himalayas, and is the size of a bustard; he is a true partridge and is marked like a chikor, but, living like the ptarmigan on or near the snow-line, he has more white about him. His bill is curved like a hawk's, very curious in a partridge. Just below the pass on the north side is the highest summer *yailāq* or camping-place of the Kirghiz, a pretty "alp" with firs; there was nobody there, but a mile further down at Ui-chi we found small crofts and tents and three or four families of Kirghiz. Two of the women wore most wonderful head-dresses, peaked fore and aft and garnished with red embroidery, quite different from the flat-topped turbans of the ladies of the Pamirs. Apparently only the richer ones wear this curious head-dress. All the Kirghiz crowded round D. for medicine; her daily "sick parade" has become quite an institution and is probably the chief reason of our popularity.

The Chopkana people have brought down an *aq-oi* for us to the little apricot grove by the bridge. We have come down 3,000 feet from Kaying and 5,000 from the top of the pass, and the warmth in this sheltered spot is delightful. To-morrow the caravan goes to Saman only, as we want to reconnoitre the Achiq Jilgha, a side-glen at the top of which I am told there is a pass leading over the Gez River and the main winter road between Kashgar and the Pamirs.

The problems of travel in the wilds have been enormously simplified for us on this pioneer trip by the admirable behaviour of our men, all of whom work splendidly so that everything runs with clockwork precision. Our programme on an average march is as follows. At seven Ahmad Bakhsh brings tea to our respective tents, shortly followed by Yakub and the tub. Yakub has had the bath-water simmering in its oil-tins on his own particular fire since the night before; the same tins provide the hot water required in the kitchen. By

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very nearly caused a stampede of the entire cavalcade. A little further on we rounded a corner and came upon the real Sinkiang Army, cavalry and infantry, whose buglers set up a wild fanfare; uniformed aides-de-camp and black-coated Chinese secretaries met us bowing with their masters' red-paper visiting cards and next moment, dismounted, we found ourselves shaking the limp unaccustomed hands of the local hierarchy. These included the Magistrate of Yarkand, an alert and intelligent Cantonese; the Commandant of the Garrison, an ancient Yunnanese General in a cream-coloured silk shirt, with a head, as D. puts it, positively waggley with age; a speechless Captain in a tightly-buttoned greatcoat, and one or two Assistant Magistrates in skull-caps and Chinese civil dress.

(From a letter of D.'s dated 29th October, 1922.)

This morning (Sunday) I went to the Mission Church and came back through the bazaars. Some of the types I saw were extraordinary—strange wild-looking men in square fur caps and ragged clothes, with Mongol faces and the eyes of people without minds! Shrivelled old men and women, mere heaps of rags, crawling about the streets. Fat Begs, picturesquely dressed in black tunics and trousers and long boots, with wonderful striped coats over all. Veiled visions with little fur-edged velvet caps, old Chinese men with brown walnut faces, and terrific Chinese babies like small lumps of dough. What it will be like on market day I can't imagine, for I am told most extraordinary types come in from the deserts and marshes round Yarkand.

Yarkand, 5th November, 1922.

Yarkand is a much larger but less effectively-situated city than Kashgar. It is all on the flat, and there is no river across which, as at Kashgar, you can obtain a *coup d'œil* of the town and its walls. All you can see from outside at any one point is a section of the massive ramparts, in good repair round the New City but somewhat dilapidated round the adjacent old town; suburbs with long straggling bazaars further confuse the view. Once inside the walls, however, you are struck by the size and spaciousness of the long roofed bazaars, far better-built than those of Kashgar, and by the quaint "bits" and picturesque corners at every turn, of which glimpses are caught through every second doorway; courtyards of humble dwellings, inns, corners by ponds with tumbledown wooden houses and weeping willows drooping over them, eating-shops and groceries, smithies and old-clothes shops and carpenter's shops, and everywhere masses of picturesquely-garbed people. The most remarkable sights in the streets are the beggars, positive miracles of grotesque raggedness and boniness. But Yarkand, though delightful at this season, must be hot and unhealthy from June to October; there are many flies and mosquitoes about still, and malaria (not a bad kind, however) is rife. The universal cretinism is distressing; every fourth person one meets has goitre. This is undoubtedly due to the bad water drunk by the people; although two large rivers come out of the mountains quite close to the city, the Yarkand and the Tiznaf, no attempt has ever been made to bring their waters regularly to the

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case arose in connexion with the murder of a British subject by his son at a village in the Yarkand district, and it became necessary for me to confer with the Amban of Yarkand at his headquarters. The march of 45 miles to Yarkand occupied a day and a half and led us through country which alternated between desert-poplar forest, marshes and cultivation. The display of bird life among the marshes along the right bank of the Yarkand River was astonishing. We saw none of the rainbow-plumaged "Shaw's pheasant" supposed to haunt these jungles, but among the reedy lakes and water-channels all along the road there was every now and again a mighty cackling and splashing of duck, geese, teal, cormorants, cranes, terns, plovers, coots, water-hens and many kinds of lesser fowl. A Paradise indeed for the naturalist and even for our ignorant selves, could we but have spared a few days to explore these little-known wilds with gun and camera. The Yarkand oasis was entered at Abad, a village of several hundred families living on land brought into cultivation twenty years before by an Amban called Liu, who used prison labour to dig a canal from the Yarkand River. This was one of several instances I came across in the Yarkand neighbourhood of cultivation being extended by enterprising and ambitious Magistrates. The area of this great oasis must be now at least twice what it was fifty years ago under the indigenous rule of Yakub Beg.

The five days my work occupied at Yarkand passed pleasantly enough at the garden of the Bar Gah, now a mass of snowy blossom, and while I sat in conclave with Amban or Aqsaqal, D. amused herself with shopping in the kaleidoscopic bazaars and exchanging visits with Swedish, Chinese, Indian and Turki friends. Once she was entertained at tea in the grand manner by the entire community of Hindu traders at their big caravanserai in the middle of the Old City, during the course of which a bowing young *bunnia* informed her that he knew the *Generail-Consul-Sahib* (i.e. me) quite well, as he had been a waiter at the United Services Club at Simla in 1920 when I had quarters there! Since then he had given up the job in order to join his brother who represented an Amritsar firm at Yarkand. Her visit to the Yamen to see the wife of the Amban was a somewhat difficult one. She found a child of eighteen, a forlorn, rather pathetic little figure dressed up like a doll, who almost died of nervousness and said through her Turki maid, "Please forgive me, I don't

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within a few hundred yards; in one field a pair of horses and another of bullocks, on another plot a fine pair of yaks was harnessed to the plough. Crossing another quite easy pass we dropped down into the Sarai Jilgha, a much less fertile valley, with only two very poor families of Kirghiz in it.

On 8th April we crossed our third and highest pass in the Qizil Tagh, the Sarai Davan, 11,500 feet. It was steep and had a regular knife-edge top, but was not difficult and our carrier's ponies which were accustomed to the Karakoram road made light of it. Descending from the pass by a steep and narrow nullah we debouched on the Kinkol Valley at Kichik Qaraul, where we were on the Tashqurghan-Kashgar road up which we had come the previous July. We had thus left the "Red Mountains" behind us.

An attractive feature of the Qizil Tagh is the partridge shooting. We were there at the wrong time of year for it, but we shot a few birds for the pot now and then, and from the number of coveys we saw it was evident that in autumn a party of two or three guns would get a very good bag indeed in any one of the three valleys we visited. The only country in which I have seen as many red-legged partridge (*chikor*) as in the Qizil Tagh is the valleys of the Sulaiman Mountains in the north of British Baluchistan. The pursuit of the chikor or *keklik* (so called in Turki from the noise they make, kik-alik-alik-alik) is one of the most strenuous forms of sport I know. The birds are usually found near a steep, often precipitous, hillside; at the slightest alarm they run for it and climb, and you have to pound up after them as hard as you can. Without beaters, the difficulty usually is to put them up. Shooting for the pot, as I always did on these tours, I usually took a long shot at a runner, in which case the covey would often get up and in their agitation break back over my head, in which case I got a shot with my left barrel. This performance I could hardly describe as a "right and left," so I called it a "ground and air." [136]

Marching up the Kinkol valley we struck westwards up the Chumbuz Jilgha, a promising glen, of which I had made a note for future exploration the previous July. It led up into another small blank patch in Sir. A. Stein's map, and my object was to survey it roughly and cross by a pass called the Kizmak which I knew led over from its head into the upper Qaratash Valley. Lest the Kizmak should prove really bad—it had never been crossed by European—I decided to send most

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562 the exception rather than the rule, and most of them simply treat the men as their equals, though perhaps finding them a little stupid!"

In the Chopkana Jilgha there was a Turki girl from Yangi Hissar married to a Kirghiz. D. noticed at once how different she was from the others, more sophisticated and not nearly so efficient. She was a fish out of water, poor girl, and not at all happy. The only specimen of a Turki-Kirghiz hybrid we came across was a youngish, unhealthy-looking little man called Tash Mulla who attached himself to us in the Yapchan Jilgha. He was rather too clever and pushing, and we did not like him as well as some of the pure Kirghiz.

462 The strength and hardiness of the women are astonishing. They are splendid workers, not only doing all the household work but milking the yaks, cows, sheep and goats, weaving the rugs and other woollen articles, making the rope, pitching and striking the *aq-ois* and performing many other duties. The men are inclined to be lazy and are fond of twanging the guitar until a late hour and lying abed of a morning. But they are wiry and capable of great exertions, and they do not by any means leave all the work to the women, as is usually said of the men in other Kirghiz communities. They are responsible for the cultivation of the barley-fields, as well as for the safety of the flocks and herds on the mountain-side. Anyone who thinks that Kirghiz men enjoy a sinecure can try looking after thirty self-willed yaks or a couple of hundred sheep on a grazing-ground 5,000 feet from top to bottom and pitched at an angle of forty-five degrees.

• 136 There could be no more interesting hunting-ground for the naturalist than these narrow but well-watered and sheltered valleys, islanded between the belt of utterly barren foothills on one side and the snowy wastes of the great ranges on the other. There must have been many interesting local variations, possibly even new species, among the plentiful fauna of the Kaying Valley alone, had we but possessed the knowledge and skill to collect them. Snow leopards exist, but fortunately for the Kirghiz are uncommon; one killed a yak calf and ten sheep just before we arrived in June 1923. I saw several herds of ibex; it was hard not to be able to go after them, but a man cannot serve two masters and I had to choose between the delights of the chase and the sterner but more fruitful cult of the plane-table. Wolves exist in some of the valleys, but the Kirghiz had cleared Kaying of them. Red foxes, as I have already mentioned, are occasionally trapped,

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136 and we saw plenty of golden marmots at a height of 12,000 feet. A curious rodent about the size of a guinea-pig lived in the fir-forest at 11,000 feet, also a very small red stoat. Hares were plentiful among the juniper woods at 10,000 feet. The highest point at which I found animal life was 16,000 feet, where I saw running about on the snow a small eight-legged spider which is probably the same as that seen by the climbers of Mount Everest at an immense altitude. I also noticed a minute animal like a lizard about an inch long on the moraine of the Torbashi Glacier at 14,500 feet. Birds also are well represented, and include the black eagle, several kinds of hawk, red-legged partridge, Tibetan snow-cock, chough, raven, long-tailed magpie, rock-pigeon and many of the common small birds of northern Europe.

137 I have already spoken of the amazing profusion of wild flowers which in June and July turned the terminal moraines of the glaciers, as well as the marshes, meadows and forest glades into veritable gardens. We did as much amateur botanizing as our other pursuits and our total ignorance of botany permitted. In the course of our two summer visits to Kaying Bashi we pressed some thirty-seven varieties and secured the seeds of seven or eight. D. also painted most of the prettier ones in water-colours. The flower that excited us most was a sweet-smelling kind of crawling purple stock, which grew only in small isolated patches among the loose stones of glacier moraines between 13,000 and 14,000 feet above the sea, by far the highest-growing flower we found. On our return to England we presented our small collection to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. To a layman, the interesting thing about it, according to the Kew experts, was that it belonged to a distinctly Central Asian rather than a Himalayan type, although the valleys in question are only about 180 miles as the crow flies from similar regions in Northern Kashmir, the flora of which is Himalayan. Like most of the flowers, the conifers of the Alps of Qungur belong to the Tien Shan rather than to the Himalayas; with the exception of the small fir-woods seen by us in the Qizil Tagh and heard of in one or two places in the Yarkand River valley, they mark the extreme south-eastern limit of the Tien Shan fir (*Picea schrenkiana*). For twelve hundred miles eastward, the whole length of the great Kunlun and Altyn Tagh Ranges, not a fir-tree is to be found; then come the forests of the Nan Shan, which flourish under moisture-laden winds from the far Pacific.

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want to guide us, though I gave him money and promised him more. Once I thought he had given us the slip among the gorges of the red hills, but we found him again. It was half past eight and pitch dark before our ears were at last greeted by the welcome sound of dogs barking, and a few minutes later we were warming ourselves at a roaring coal fire in a cosy room at the Haji's farm. The old man himself was not there, but his sons welcomed us most kindly and feasted our men royally on mutton and maize bread.

Next morning the air was clearer than ever, and we realized how attractive was the country into which we had stumbled blindly, as it were, the night before. The ranch—for the place corresponded somewhat to my idea of a South American *estancia*—lay in the midst of an immense sweep of grassy upland, above which to the north rose snow-clad ridges fringed with firs. That day's march, from Yetim Dōbe to Qizil Bulak near the foot of the Muzart Pass, was one of the most enjoyable I have ever performed. Our guide, one of the Haji's sons, led us over one little pass after another, in and out of charming green valleys, some inhabited, others not, some clothed only with wild rose and barberry, others dotted with clumps of trees resplendent in gorgeous autumn tints, orange, russet, gold and scarlet. We lunched contentedly off cold partridge sandwiches and cake under a clump of desert poplars in the middle of a hay-field perched up on a hill-side opposite the snows; a picturesque Sart woman gathered wisps of mown hay near by and loaded them on a quaint wheel-less bullock-cart. She was not in the least shy, and exchanged remarks with us the while. On this and the following day we enjoyed such sport after small game as I had never known before. I was accustomed in the mountains to the south of Kashgar to getting as many red-legged partridge on the march as I liked, with a few sand-grouse, pigeons and perhaps a duck or two thrown in; but never had I found myself in such a small-game shooter's paradise as the southern valleys of the Central Tien Shan. Without straying a hundred yards from the road I shot (1) red-legged partridge, (2) *sisi*, a kind of very small and succulent partridge common in Baluchistan and Persia, but not seen by us elsewhere in Chinese Turkistan, (3) sand-grouse, (4) teal, (5) hares, (6) blue pigeons, besides which I missed an easy chance at a pair of those fine birds (7) imperial sandgrouse. I may mention here that on this tour altogether we came across no less than fourteen different

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kinds of small game, and that without going off the road. Besides the seven enumerated above, we saw, either in the mountains or in the jungles of the Tarim River valley, the following: (8) Shaw's pheasant, (9) duck, including mallard pintail, gadwall, golden-eye, and red-crested pochard, (10) snipe, (11) woodcock, (12) geese, (13) plover, (14) Tibetan snow-cock. Of these I shot specimens of all except woodcock and Tibetan snow-cock. The former we saw at Maralbashi flying through a garden; the latter I came across in large numbers at 11,000–12,000 feet while stalking ibex up the Yangi Art Jilgha.

Of many pictures that live in our memory of that delightful march, perhaps the most vivid is of the shrine of Qara-sakal Atam, "My Father Blackbeard." It is situated in the loveliest little glen imaginable. A limpid stream plashes down through open meadows from the fir-clad ridges of the Central Tier Shan, until it joins the main valley through a narrow neck between two backbones of reddish rock. Just above this neck is a coppice of fine old mountain ashes and desert poplars enclosing a glade of smooth turf and a bubbling spring. Barberry bushes, now a mass of carmine berries, and the brilliant orange-yellow of the trees in their autumn finery blend perfectly with the rich russets and ochres of the surrounding rocks; looking northwards, the grassy steppe sweeps right up to the distant forest above which again tower the snow-clad Mountains of Heaven. Father Blackbeard's shrine is only a bunch of sticks, festooned with votive rags and embellished with the horns of wild sheep; but whoever he was and whenever he lived, he is marked as having been a saint of taste—for did he not choose the most beautiful spot in all the Tien Shan to be his hermitage?

Two long but easy marches down the open and partially-cultivated valley of the Muzart River brought us to the small town of Bai on the Aqsu-Kucha road. Here we found the Mir Munshi awaiting us; he had come out from Kashgar to help me with my work at Bai and Aqsu. We stayed four days at the roomy Chinese rest-house at Bai, most of which I spent interviewing various British subjects from Kucha, three marches further on. The town, which is the headquarters of a third-class Magistrate, is an undistinguished Sleepy Hollow of a place, populated by Turkis and Chinese Muhammadan Tungans in the proportion of about three to one. It was our first experience of the latter race *en masse*, and we were

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had to pick him up and put him back on it. After a time he fell off again, and his horse became frightened and kicked off its saddle and upset the baggage-ponies, and they stampeded all over the jungle and many loads came off. It took us a long time to get the caravan started again. As the *chirik* could not sit on his own horse I brought him in across my saddle-bow."

At the next stage, Chadar Kul, we found ourselves among Dulanis, the same cheerful, dirty, good-looking, quarrelsome, disreputable, singularly attractive race whose acquaintance we had made in the spring at Merket. Once more we chafed under the attentions of hordes of male sightseers, once more we marvelled at the beauty of cherubic but incredibly dirty children. Just outside the village we passed two large parties of gamblers, almost all men, dicing under the trees; in the bazaar their wives were minding the shops and doing what little work is done in a Dulani village. The Tarim river jungles, which here began in earnest, held great numbers of "Shaw's pheasant," magnificent birds with plumage of flame-colour shot with purple and tail-feathers barred with black. The sport, indeed, in this neighbourhood was almost too good; besides the woods full of pheasants, the ponds and marsh-lakes swarmed with duck and teal, which had evidently just arrived on their way south. At one place the wild duck actually came and sat on the village pond, eighty yards from the back of the rest-house in which we lodged.

At Tumshuk, forty miles east of Maralbashi, we left the main road and struck southwards for about twenty miles to a lonely shepherd's cottage on the south bank of the Tarim, where we spent four most pleasant and restful days encamped in a little grove of desert poplars among the melon-beds. Pheasants, duck, teal and other game abounded, while the brushwood-covered flats were a perfect Zoo for wild life of all kinds.

It was a charming place in the bright autumn weather; the blue river wound close by; to the south rose abruptly from the plain another of the curious ranges of hills which are peculiar to the neighbourhood; within a mile or so lay two beautiful fresh-water lakes, one of them ten miles long and two broad, reflecting in their glassy waters here the crags of the Choka Tagh, there the mighty dunes of the Takla Makan. For we were on the very verge of the great desert; it was beyond those very dunes that Sven Hedin lost all his camels

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and all but one of his men from thirst, and was with within an ace of perishing himself.

I was interested in the shepherds who lived at the cottage. There were three brothers with their families, the men being in the employ of one of the Maralbashi Begs, Abid Beg. For herding and shearing their master's sheep they received one fleece in ten; out of this wool they made ropes and sacking which they bartered at Maralbashi for flour and cloth. They also trapped foxes and netted fish, which in this river are large and quite good eating. Finally, they grew melons, of which they sold more than they ate. The soil, being salt, was good for melons but for no other crop. The three brothers had at first formed a joint family, but had afterwards ceased to do so owing to quarrels. They continued to live together at the farm, but whereas formerly they had owned three cocks in common, now each family owned one cock, and so on.

Recrossing the Tarim on 7th November we marched to Maralbashi, camping on the way at the foot of the highest and boldest of the miniature mountain-ranges of the district, the Mazar Tagh. Outside the town we were received most kindly by our friend the Russian-speaking Amban whom we had met at Merket, Chiu Da-heng. We stayed in the garden of the British Aqsaqal, a venerable Chitrali merchant; here pheasants came to feed every morning and woodcock flitted among the trees, for the charm of Maralbashi is in the proximity of the Tarim jungle, the wild life of which hems it in on all sides. Near by the dying Kashgar River flowed sluggishly, its waters destined to be spent in cultivation ere ever they could join the Tarim. On its bank stood a charming little tiled and whitewashed mausoleum built by our host in memory of his father.

We were guests at the Yamen more than once, and there had an opportunity of studying at close quarters some fine specimens Mr. Chiu kept of the peculiar swamp deer of the country. The stag we saw was distinctly larger than the average Scottish red deer and its horns were longer, smoother and more slender; its snout was long with a narrow, thin muzzle. In colour it resembled the red deer, except that its tail was light brown instead of dark. The hind was also bigger than her Scottish counterpart. There was also a fawn, a delightful, little animal with a thick, dark brown coat.

For the five marches between Maralbashi and Kashgar (145 miles) we were lucky in having perfect weather. The

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weaker pilgrims had been lost in the snow, thereby acquiring as much merit as if they had reached Mecca. They had nothing but praise for the authorities in Chitral, at Peshawar, on the Indian railways and at Bombay, where the official "Protector of Pilgrims" had put them on a specially-chartered steamer for Jeddah. In the Hijaz their troubles had recommenced, heat and disease claiming more victims than the snows of the Hindu Kush, besides which they had been held up for weeks by Bedouin robbers between Mecca and Medina. Returning by the same route, the survivors had found little or no snow on the passes and had had a comparatively easy journey.

Another interesting meeting was with a fine-looking old Kirghiz in a rich cloak and green turban at Subashi. This man, Khokan Beg, by name, told me that in Tsarist times he had been a great man in the Russian Pamirs, no less than the Mingbashi (Headman of a Thousand Households) of Great Qara Kul. Then a Pharaoh had arisen who knew him not, and he had migrated to Chinese territory with his wives and his sons and his daughters and flocks and his herds and everything that was his. He also told me that nine or ten years before he had entertained "a great British Consul and his wife from Kashgar," after whom he inquired; these can have been no other than General Sir Percy and Miss Ella Sykes, who visited the Russian Pamirs in 1915.

The Pamirs are well known to be the habitat of *Ovis Poli*, one of the three largest kinds of wild sheep in the world, the other two being *O. Ammon*, of Tibet, and *O. Karelini*, of the Tien Shan. Nowadays, however, good heads are very rare on the Chinese side of the frontier, especially in the more accessible regions. I gathered at Subashi, which used at one time to be a good centre, that most of the Kirghiz nowadays have guns of a sort and that they shoot down the sheep indiscriminately for food. The only corner of Chinese territory in which *Ovis Poli* are still to be found in some numbers is in the Qara Zak and neighbouring valleys, two or three marches north-west of Bulunkul. A pair of horns was brought to me which had come from the Russian side; evidently it was expected that I would want to take a trophy home with me, and would pay a good price. The measurements were 56 inches in length and 15¼ girth.

Even if there had been a chance of a stalk, as I had hoped, I should have had some difficulty in working it in, for thanks

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these proved to be gold-mines from which the sand, having been removed in baskets, provides a fair amount of gold-dust, after being washed out. In some places the grit on which we walked was composed of minute granite fragments of every colour, and it was very interesting to notice that the little, grey, desert lizard, which had never left us all through our travels, had so accommodated itself to the soil in which it lived that its skin had become many-hued, like a beautiful mosaic, so that it was indistinguishable from the surrounding ground.

A large temple stood on an eminence not far from the ravine, and here we found the lamas, who had been as prompt as ourselves in quitting the camp, burning incense and making obeisance to the gods. The lamas expressed some surprise that we neither burned incense nor prostrated ourselves, nor sought the blessing of the Guardians of the Road by striking the temple bell with its wooden hammer to call their attention. We were the only travellers on that road who would dare to take such a journey without observing this ritual, and such an omission must be either a sign of impiety or that we enjoyed the protection of a power superior to any god in that temple. 'We never start on our day's journey without asking the blessing of God,' explained one of our carters, who two months previously would have been as unwilling as the lamas themselves to leave without the blessing of the Goddess of Mercy.

It was fortunate for us that this first journey, taken as it was by day, was not an abnormally long one, and by 10 p.m. we reached Shachüantz—'The Spring of the Sands'—but unfortunately it surpassed all the others we had hitherto sampled for the bad quality of its water, which was metallic as well as bitter and salt. The slabs of granite over which we had driven had,

I[Near Hsinghsinghsia -- Analyst]

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CHAPTER XXXV

FROM DOVE TOWER TO HAMI

361 [366] THE oasis of 'Dove Tower' proved to be somewhat larger than those which we had recently passed. It even boasted a little shop where one could purchase matches, cigarettes, tobacco, small-sized face towels, incense, and the poorest quality of the paper articles [405] required for temple worship. This shop was also the post-office, though it provided neither stamps nor post-cards; it kept, however, a surprisingly good stock of medicinal plants and opium. The few inns which com- 485 posed the village were built at the foot of a high, over- [136] hanging cliff riddled with holes, in which wild doves built their nests. Flocks of these birds were always flying across the face of the cliff, their wings shining in the sunlight as though covered with silver and their feathers with yellow gold. The heat reflected from the cliff was intense, and we were glad to find the inn room to be windowless, and depending entirely for ventilation on a small hole in the roof. This type of room at first sight seems to be devoid of any single element of comfort, for on entering the traveller finds himself in a dark apartment scarcely larger than a cupboard. Apart from a narrow passage, the whole floor space is occupied by a mud *kang*. In place of a ceiling the roof is lined with dried grass, indescribably filthy and coated with a black deposit from the heavy smoke of the smouldering manure, and which grass gradually loosens and hangs down but a few feet from the sleeper's face. A small round hole in the roof, about the size of an ordinary stove-pipe, supplies the ventilation and one ray of daylight, for as there is no window, on closing the

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133 The next dawn found us at a beautiful spot called
312 Yatzchüan—'The Duck Pond.' It held a 'living spring,' that is to say, one in which the water is in constant motion, welling up from the sandy bed, sometimes with such force as to set the whole pond in ebullition. Every few minutes the depths were strongly disturbed, and a trembling column of sand would rise to the surface and then break in large bubbles. The oases through which we were passing were fed by the same water supply as that which irrigated the fields of Hami. It has been pointed out that the traveller must not allow himself to be deceived by the long, continuous blue line, indicating the flow of imaginary rivers connecting the ranges of the Barkul mountains and Karlik Tagh with visionary lakes. As a matter of fact, the water from the melted snows is lost in the gravel soil at the foot of these ranges, but reappears many miles away in such living springs as that by which we rested, or in a saline well in some depression of the desert. The Khan of Hami owns a house at this place, in which he stays when travelling on official business, and the caretaker allowed us the use of his rooms. They were clean and comfortable, but as bare as an inn. Near the front gate was his private mosque, decorated with a picture of Mecca. These buildings were throughout of mud, but the outer walls were yellow-washed, with a view of giving to the whole an imperial aspect.

133 On leaving the 'Duck Pond' we drove for twelve
[185] hours on a long, arid, stony, uphill stage, and shortly after sunrise arrived at an isolated inn. For several days each stage had brought us nearer to the foothills of the Barkul Range, and here we were so close that only three days' journey north-east divided us from the
133 town and lake of Barkul, both of which lie on the other
156 side of the Range. In these mountains are herds of wild

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asses and of bronchos, reputed to be untameable. We were now at an altitude of 5500 feet, and on the edge of a bare plateau overlooking a depression to the south, from which a road led off in the direction of Turfan. It was an ancient road, now in disuse, being considered too dangerous for caravans. The wind blows down this valley with such tremendous force that whole caravans have perished, the carts being blown to pieces and the men and beasts overwhelmed by the whirling sand. The innkeeper pointed out a spot called San Chien Fangtz—'The Three Rooms'—where eighteen carts laden with silver are said to have totally vanished. Acting as servant to this innkeeper was a young man who greeted us with sheepish cordiality. 'You got away all right from Hsinghsinghsia,' he said, and he proved to be one of the men who had escaped on the rainy night of our stay there, and who had not been recaptured.

Leaving that afternoon, we saw a lizard differing from any we had met with in other parts of the desert. It was about one and a half feet long, and was too quick for the carters, who chased it with their whips but failed to catch it. Continuing uphill between rocks, granite boulders, and volcanic slopes, over a stony road, we reached Chekuluchüan—'Cart Wheel Halt.' Of the three inns which formed this hamlet, two were untenanted and the third was badly broken down. Some of the rooms were roofless, while in others large holes had appeared in the walls, but having accomplished the short stage we were thankful to get rather longer hours of sleep than usual, and felt greatly refreshed by the cooler air of this quiet spot. The little row of inns stood in a gorge between stony hills, and the force of the gales through the narrow ravine was so great as to have worn the rocks into hollows, in the depths of which

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and of perpendicular strata. Great naked crags towered above us, and in some parts the side of the mountain was cut clean through as with a gigantic knife. Our previous experience of mountain passes had led us to expect a road which must rise and fall with the course of the mountain, and we were greatly astonished when, hour after hour, we still pursued a course with no semblance of a hill. The rugged grandeur of the scene was most impressive. On either side the loose boulders were flung in wild confusion, though never blocking the path so as to make it impassable to the carts.

As the night wore on the constant winding of the Pass, in which we could never see more than a few hundred feet ahead owing to its tortuous nature, made the stage seem interminable. It appeared as though, after so many hours, the next turn *must* bring an opening to view, but once again the road twisted and vanished round yet another corner. Suddenly, without warning, we emerged, and saw in the brilliant moonlight the inn of Towshui—' Head Spring '—which was a welcome sight indeed.

During the winter months this gorge is closed by the snow, and many travellers have been lost in the drifts caused by the sweeping of the winds round the sharp corners ; the optional road via Turfan has then to be taken. The only signs of life in these desolate, barren, stony chasms were the birds of prey which hovered overhead. A Chinese traveller told us that once, when eating a wayside lunch in the gorge, he turned his head aside for an instant, and like lightning an eagle swept past, taking the bread from his hand.

From Towshui to the next inn, which is Tashitow—' The Great Stone '—the road led over the watershed dividing Chinese Turkestan from Dzungaria. We drove over undulating downs, and as we descended the other

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lighted, as the most sure means of keeping unwelcome guests at bay. The tins of Keating's powder, which we had on order, had failed us with the other stores, but even had we secured them, nothing can finally circumvent these insects, which creep along the rafters and drop from the ceiling on to the hapless victim beneath! We were soon fast asleep, but at dawn a still worse plague faced us, for the walls were black with loathsome flies, and not one moment's peace did we know throughout our Sabbath rest in Muleiho.

The little town was in the proud position of having been lately raised to the civic status of a '*hsien*' city, in consequence of which it now had its own Resident Civil Magistrate, whose new Yamen had just been erected.

A wooden bridge spanned the wide river which rushed by the city wall, and here the inhabitants were wont to gather in the cool of the day, at the hour when all the animals of the city were led down to be watered.

The arable land was extensive and splendidly irrigated, and there was every sign of prosperity. Strings of little donkeys, driven by Turki vendors, constantly passed our inn door laden with baskets of grapes from Turfan. The large black and white grapes were not yet ripe, but the small seedless variety was plentiful and cheap. This is the kind from which the Turfan sultana is produced in such abundance.

A band of children, with whom we made friends, took us up to a court in the Yamen buildings to see a red deer, which had been caught young in the mountains and was being reared in captivity. Its antlers were particularly fine, and we noticed that all the medicine shops of Muleiho were decorated with splendid specimens of such antlers, which are highly valued for medicinal purposes.

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sleeping accommodation to be had, we contented ourselves with our cart. Some time before dawn the yard was astir. Every carter threw a measure of grain into his animal's trough, watered the beasts, then called to the landlord to settle the account, which transaction was always accompanied by squabbling and cursing, but not until the required amount was handed over did the big double doors open, and allow the carts to pass out. We, too, were up early, and for breakfast had the unaccustomed luxury of a bowl of warm milk which an old Chantow ladled out from a brass pot, in which it was kept hot over a brazier.

We were now entering the district known as 'Fly Land,' a name which speaks for itself, and from this time until we reached the higher and more arid land near Chuguchak, our meals were made revolting by these loathsome pests, which also made rest or sleep by day impossible. Knowing this, we had brought lengths of mosquito netting with which all our food was covered and in which we wrapped our provisions, but still the table was a black, moving mass of winged horrors. Soon after midday we were at Hutupi—a thirty-mile stage—which we accomplished with great ease. The range of the Tian Shan, culminating in the glistening Bogdo, made a most striking background, and the land around the villages was very fertile, producing good crops of millet, wheat and sorgum. At the Moslem inn where we stayed, all the best rooms were occupied by the family of the innkeeper himself, but we always had access to the harem, and through the womens' court a little back door took us straight out into fields near running water, where we enjoyed space and some coolness. The lane at the back of the house was also the connecting link with the back-door of every house on the north side of the village, and

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vegetables and fruit, especially grapes and apples, find a ready market in the capital. The grapes were the largest we had ever seen, and we carried in the cart an abundant supply which more than made up for the lightening of our load by the bread we had consumed! We were now only a few miles from the Manas River, which is the most important stream in this part of Turkestan. Its source is in the Celestial Mountains, but it finally loses itself in the sand. A little earlier in the season, when the snows were melting, the Manas River is often impassable, and a Chinese lady friend had a few weeks earlier been upset into the water and nearly lost her life. We were now in the last days of August, and it was already cold in the heights of the Tian Shan, therefore we had no cause to fear the sudden treacherous rise of the water which comes from the melting snow, and we crossed without difficulty.

Our next stopping-place was Ulan-Usun—'Blue Water'—where we had the advantage of occupying the inn room which had been papered and swept for the use of the Governor's son, who had preceded us on his way to Zaisan. Fresh red paper with eulogistic phrases decorated the door frame; clean matting covered the *kang*, and the court had been generally tidied up in honour of such an important guest. The flies, however, still remained.

The country here was splendid grazing ground, covered with tall 'chi-chi' grass. The Mongolian nomads pitch their tents on this plain during the winter months, when the cold drives them down from the higher pastures.

Our driver, though a surly cross-grained fellow, was beginning to thaw under our constant friendly advances. His knowledge of Chinese was very poor, but the present of a bunch of grapes or a piece of new bread,

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This town is known to Russians as Chuguchak, to Chinese as Tacheng, but colloquially it is always called Behya—'The Town of Seagulls'—because these birds, following the course of the Irtish River all the way from Arctic regions, collect here at certain seasons of the year. We had in fact already seen them in the Gobi further south, but could scarcely credit them to be really seagulls until we learnt that it is their habit to follow the great rivers as far as their sources. Geographically and politically the position of Tacheng is an important one, forming as it does the one outlet towards Siberia for all Turkestan. It is a populous, busy city, with important Chinese and Russian quarters. There is a Russian Consul in residence, part of whose duties consists in the issuing of temporary passports to drivers and carters passing to and fro over the border. There are postal and telegraph offices and a military station. The postmaster, Mr. Chang, was very helpful and friendly. He knew something of foreigners' tastes, being a Hankow man, and suggested that 'the ladies might enjoy a drive round the city,' and he therefore sent his Russian carriage and driver to show us the sights. Having completed the *Grand Tour* this man then asked us if we would like to see some more. 'Certainly,' we said, 'show us all there is worth seeing,' whereupon, with a grin, he whipped up his horse, and starting off at a good pace took us exactly over the same ground as before! The smart carriage, with strangers seated in it, attracted some attention on its first round, but when we appeared the second time the shopkeepers themselves came to their doors, exclaiming, 'Here they come again!' while one, making a movement with his hand, indicated that we were on a perpetual circular tour. To 'save face' we therefore drew up before some of the shops, and enquired the price of many of the goods, though we had not the slightest intention